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ABSTRACT

These instructional objectives have been selected from materials submitted to the Curriculum Laboratory of the Graduate School of Education at UCLA. Arranged by major course goals, these objectives are offered simply as samples that may be used where they correspond to the skills, abilities, and attitudes instructors want their students to acquire. These objectives may also serve as models for assisting instructors to translate other instructional units into specific measurable terms. For other objectives in a related course see: ED 033 712 (American Institutions [Political Science]). (MB)

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Instructional Objectives for a Junior College Course in United States Government

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ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges
University of California
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UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

UNIT I + UNIT II - THE NATURE OF MAN

All governments are conceived in some measure by a conscious, or unconscious, belief about the nature of man. In discussing the rationale for the American system of government, James Madison said, "If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If Angels were to govern men, neither external no internal controls on government would be necessary." As the basic political question since the time of Plato and Aristotle, the nature of man has been considered by great political philosophers over the centuries. From these ideas about man and his character were developed ideas of how men should be governed.

The student is invited to consider this problem for himself and to consider the ideas of the men who designed our government. He will also begin to analyze the terms liberal and conservative and to understand their various meanings over time.

I. Goal: The student will have knowledge of the three basic trends of thought about the nature of man which were held at the time of the Constitutional Convention, as exemplified in the views of Hamilton, Jefferson and Madison.

Objective 1. Given a list of characteristics of man, the student will be able to identify whether they were held by Madison, Jefferson or Hamilton, or in some degree by all of them. (80% accuracy)

II. Goal: The student will learn the various meanings of the terms liberal and conservative and how these meanings have changed over time.

Objective 2. Given a list of items which describe classical liberal and conservative views, the student will identify which are liberal and which are conservative (80%)

Objective 3. Given a list of items which describe some current ideas about liberal and conservative, the student will identify which are liberal and which are conservative. (70%)

Objective 4. The student will contribute to a class discussion which considers some prominent political figures such as Barry Goldwater or Ted Kennedy to see in what sense

these men are liberal and what sense conservative by classical and current standards. (100%)

UNIT III - THE NATURE OF GOVERNMENT

After considering the nature of man, we are led naturally into the ways in which men organize themselves into civilized societies. We can ask the question, why do we have governments? We can also consider why the men at the Constitutional Convention chose the form of government we continue to use to this day. How did their beliefs about the nature of man influence the governmental forms they selected? We will consider the things which were and are unique to American government, particularly the separation of powers, checks, and balances and federalism.

I. Goal: The student will understand how and why a view of the nature of man must lead to a corresponding view of the proper nature of government.

Objective 1. In class discussion the student will contribute ideas on what form of government would be appropriate if all men were evil, or conversely if all men were good. He will consider such questions as. . . Is the basic function of government to control men? Is the basic function of government to be responsive to the wishes of men? What types of evils did the framers of the Constitution fear? Is government a negative or positive force today? What should it be? (100%)

Objective 2. The student will write a paragraph in class stating which view of man seems to prevail-in the Constitution, in the Bill of Rights. (90%)

II. Goal: The student will learn about the solution to the problem of governing as developed in the United States Constitution.

Objective 3. The student will be able to list the goals of the American Constitution as given in its preamble. (90%)

Objective 4. The student will be able to select from a list of alternatives which arguments favor the separation of powers of government and which favor more unified control. (70%)

Objective 5. Given a list of powers of government as described in the Constitution, the student will identify which branch of government exercises them. He will also be able to identify which powers are shared between branches of government. (80%)

Objective 6. Given a list of possible characteristics of man, the student will indicate whether he believes such a characteristic would lead a rational person to restrict the role of government or to enlarge the role of government. (100%)

Objective 7. In class discussion, the student will express the reasons for his choices in Objective 4. (100%)

III. Goal: The student will learn the meanings of the terms negative and positive government, and their significance for Constitutional government.

Objective 8. The student will contribute to a class discussion on the role of the Constitution in an era of positive government. In it he will consider the question of whether or not the Constitution limits the governments power to solve the problems we are facing today. (100%)

UNIT IV - THE AMERICAN POLITY

Given the views and institutions as conceived by the framers of the Constitution, how well do these conform to the realities of the twentieth century? To consider the workings of government, it is necessary to look at the American voter to see what he is like -- his strengths and his weaknesses. We will consider such questions as the depth of the voter's knowledge about government and specific issues, his rationality, his group affiliations, political classes, and social classes.

I. Goal: The student will be able to describe the general characteristics of the electorate as described in the various voting studies.

Objective 1. Given brief descriptions of various voters, the student will give an opinion as to whether the person is likely to vote Democratic, Republican, for a third party, or not to vote at all. (80%)

Objective 2. The student will distinguish in a brief paragraph between a political class and a social class. (90%)

II. Goal: The student will consider and understand the arguments of V.O. Key, Jr., in defending the rationality of the electorate.

Objective 3. In class, in writing, the student will restate Key's basic argument for the rationality of the electorate. (90%)

Objective 4. The student will list some of the possible issues which might have caused the electorate to vote against the Democratic Party in 1968 after supporting it so heavily in 1964. (90%)

III.Goal: The student will consider the arguments that the upper political classes are fragmented by issues and its opposition that the upper political classes form a "power elite."

Objective 5. Given a series of multiple choice questions, the student will identify the assumptions of the fragmentation theorists and the assumptions of the power elite theorists. (70%)

UNIT V - PARTIES & INTEREST GROUPS

Political Parties are not mentioned anywhere in the Constitution, and their legal basis has been built up largely through tradition and later codified in some state laws. In spite of their informal beginnings, they are now an essential part of the governmental process, and to many people the essence of democracy is to be found in the two-party system.

Interest groups are also a familiar part of the political system, although special interests are often considered more as inevitable evils rather than as a positive force in the polity. Much of the writing of the Constitution was influenced by the effort to "break and control the violence of fraction."

Yet both of these types of groups have their place in the American political system and are in some respects necessary to its proper functioning. It is through these groups that the individual citizen can often make his voice heard and by combining with others of similar points of view can have a large effect on governmental policies and actions.

I. Goal: The student will know the functions and roles of political parties and special interest groups.

Objective 1. Given a list of activities, the student will be able to identify which are appropriate to the parties and which are appropriate to interest groups. (80%)

Objective 2. Given a list of current political issues, the student will determine which major political party is likely to support them. (70%)

Objective 3. The student will write a paragraph in class giving the reasons for the lack of success of third parties in the past. He will also give his opinion on the probable future of the Peace and Freedom Party and the American Independent Party. (100%)

II. Goal: The student will learn where political parties and special interest groups are most likely to exert influence on the political processes.

Objective 4. Given a list of places where influence might be exercised, the student will match a corresponding list of interest groups and political parties who might be expected to exert influence at such a point. (70%)

III.Goal: The student will understand the role of political parties in enabling the government to operate in the midst of conflict and come to an acceptable agreement on policy.

Objective 5. The student will be able to list five characteristics of the American political parties which enable them to survive and mediate conflicts in a large and diverse country. (100%)

Objective 6. The student will be able to list five characteristics of political parties which makes it difficult to move quickly to solve political and social problems. (100%)

Objective 7. The student will write a short paragraph on the advantages and disadvantages of the American type of party government as exemplified by the statements in objectives 1 and 2. (100%)

UNIT VI - THE INSTITUTION OF GOVERNMENT:

CONGRESS

Basic to an understanding of the operation of American government is a knowledge of its institutions as defined by the Constitution and as they really work in practice. The basic law gives only a part of the totality of the political process as seen in Congressional action.

I. Goal: The student will understand the basic vocabulary of terms used in discussing Congress - Speaker, President Pro-Tem, Rules Committee, Appropriations Committee, concurrent resolution, impeach, coalition, log-rolling, lobbying.

Objective 1. Given a list of multiple choice questions, the student will be able to recognize the correct definitions of the basic terms. (80%)

II. Goal: The student will understand the organization and structures of the United States Congress.

Objective 2. Given a list of terms, characteristics and phrases describing the House and/or Senate, the student will identify which they apply to. (80%)

Objective 3. In class, the student will write a brief outline of the steps which must be passed for a bill to become a law. (80%)

Objective 4. In class discussion, the student will consider the process of enacting a law including where it is likely to originate, the executive agencies likely to be involved, which side the parties are likely to take, the interest groups involved, who is likely to testify on which side, where it might bog down, up to the President's signature. (A bill in a specific issue area such as Civil Rights, Defense or Welfare can be chosen by the class.) (100%)

III. Goal: The student will consider the role of the representative and know the two basic theories of representation.

Objective 5. In class discussion the student will discuss the problems of representation, how a representative can make himself aware of the feelings of his constituents, how a representative makes his voting decisions. (100%)

IV. Goal: The student will learn of the importance of the committee system in Congress and will be able to explain its operation.

Objective 6. Given a list of legislative functions, the student will be able to match the probable committee assignments of each. (70%)

Objective 7. From a series of ten multiple choice questions, the student will be able to select the appropriate description of Congressional action. (80%)

V. Goal: The student will know the powers of Congress and their limits.

Objective 8. Given a list of powers of government, the student will be able to match them with the appropriate house of Congress. (70%)

UNIT VII - THE INSTITUTIONS OF GOVERNMENT:
THE PRESIDENCY

The most visible of all our governmental institutions, the Presidency is also one of the least understood. The office changes markedly with each new occupant, yet is also stays the same in a certian basic sense. As the hub of our government, its powers and limits are of prime importance to an understanding of our political system.

I. Goal: Basic vocabulary - the student will be able to identify and define the following terms: Executive Office of the President, Pocket Veto, Executive Orders, Presidential Government, Chief Legislator, Council of Economic Advisors, Cabinet, Special Assistant.

Objective 1. Given a series of multiple choice questions, the student will be able to define the basic terms. (80%)

II. Goal: The student will know the three theories of presidential power and will know the various roles of the President.

Objective 2. Given a list of possible Presidential activities, the student will be able to identify which are appropriate to which roles as described by Rossiter. (80%)

Objective 3. From the same list, the student will match the roles with the appropriate theory of the presidency. (90%)

III. Goal: The student will know some of the limitations on Presidential power.

Objective 4. The student will be able to list at least ten of Rossiter's twenty limitations on Presidential power. (90%)

IV. Goal: The student will develop a sense of the development of the Presidency and will be able to identify the President's associated with various changes and the growth of the office.

Objective 5. In class discussion, the student will discuss Rossiter's summary of Presidential history and will give his own evaluation of the President's as compared to that given by Rossiter. (100%)

V. Goal: The student will understand the nature of the Electoral College, its development over time, and the arguments of those who favor its continuation, modification or abolition.

Objective 6. In a series of multiple choice questions, the student will be able to identify characteristics of the Electoral College and will be able to identify arguments for and against its change. (80%)

UNIT VIII - INSTITUTIONS OF GOVERNMENT:
THE ADMINISTRATIVE BUREAUCRACY

The federal civilian bureaucracy now numbers approximately 3,000,000 persons and is technically considered to be part of the executive branch which is headed by the President. It is barely mentioned in the Constitution, yet its actions often have the most direct and profound consequences for individuals. A knowledge of its role, operation and control is essential for the citizen who wishes to be effective in securing governmental action or inaction in areas both large and small.

I. Goal: Basic Terms - The student will understand the terms specialist, generalist, interest-group liberalism, bureaucrat, red tape, quasi-legislative, clientele agency, regulatory agency, independent agency, Pendleton Act, Rational Bureaucracy, incrementalism.

Objective 1. Given a series of multiple choice questions, the student will be able to identify the correct definition of the basic terms. (80%)

II. Goal: The student will learn the political basis for administration, and will consider whether the traditional ideal of neutral and impartial administration is feasible.

Objective 2. Given a list of governmental functions, the student will select which of these are handled by administrative agencies of the federal government. (90%)

Objective 3. From a list of governmental functions, the student will match the administrative agency which is most likely to handle the function. (70%)

Objective 4. In class discussion, the student will contribute to a discussion of what is "The Public Interest", and what is neutral, impartial administration. (100%)

III. Goal: The student will consider the problem of the administrator as politician. He will also consider the power implications when you cannot "throw the rascals out."

Objective 5. The student will write a paragraph in class explaining the reasons why civil service reform were undertaken and why these reforms are being criticized by some people today. (95%)

UNIT IX - THE INSTITUTIONS OF GOVERNMENT: THE JUDICIARY

The judicial branch of the federal government involves a complex of courts beginning at the district level and moving through the Courts of Appeal up to the Supreme Court. For all citizens, the courts are a place of final appeal from the acts of the legislative and executive branches of government.

I. Goal: Basic terms - Writ of Certiori, Judicial Review, Stare decisis, court packing, statutory law, legislative intent, dissenting opinion, majority opinion, judicial activist, judicial restraint, equity, adversary system, strict construction.

Objective 1. Given a series of multiple choice questions, the student will be able to identify the correct definition of the basic terms. (80%)

II. Goal: The student will understand the Constitutional basis for the federal judicial system and will know the procedures by which judges are selected and confirmed in office. He will also know the procedure for their removal from office.

Objective 2. Given a series of true-false questions, the student will be able to select the correct description of the process of judicial selection. (80%)

III. Goal: The student will know the individual liberties afforded the citizen under the Bill of Rights.

Objective 3. Given a list of public or private actions, the student will determine which are constitutionally guaranteed. (95%)

Objective 4. Given al list of ten landmark Supreme Court decisions, the student will correctly identify seven by matching them with the principle decided. (70%)

IV. Goal: The student will consider the nature of justice. What it means for the average citizen, the feasibility of a judicial remedy for most people, the problem of time and justice considering the long periods it takes to get a final judicial decision.

Objective 5. The student will contribute to a discussion of these problems in class. (100%)

UNIT X - FEDERALISM: STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

While the national government is the focus of the most widespread public attention, the operations of state and local governments often have a more immediate effect on the individual citizen. Although a detailed study of state and local government demands a course of its own, we can consider some of the general forms of state and local governments, the areas of responsibility of the state and local governments, and the legal basis of state and local governments.

I. Goal: The student will learn the meaning of the term federalism and consider its significance today. He will consider the significance of the fact that government acts directly on individuals rather than on state or local governments only. (Compare to Articles of Confederation.)

Objective 1. In a test situation, the student will define the term federalism and compare the difference it makes in the Constitution as opposed the way the national government operated under the Articles of Confederation. (80%)

Objective 2. The student will list five examples of cases where the federal government acts directly on the individual and five examples where it acts indirectly on the individual through state or local government. (90%)

Objective 3. The student will be able to list three advantages and three disadvantages of federalism. (100%)

II. Goal: Basic terms - initiative, referendum, recall, urban renewal, municipal charter, states' rights, social welfare, mayor-council form of government, city manager, special district.

Objective 4. Given a list of the basic terms, the student will be able to match each with its correct definition. (80%)

III. Goal: The student will develop a deeper understanding of the problems facing state and local government today.

Objective 5. Given a list of state and local government agencies, the student will name at least two major problems facing each. (100%)

UNIT XI - THE CITIZEN IN A DEMOCRACY

In a democracy the citizen is supposed to rule. His is the final word, and he merely delegates his sovereign power to his representatives in government. In actual fact, in a large democracy such as the United States, the individual citizen often feels frustrated and powerless -- and unable to make his opinions felt or his voice heard. In this unit we consider what the citizen can do to make his wishes known and to operate effectively to get governmental action.

I. Goal: The student will come to some understanding of the role of public opinion in a democracy.

Objective 1. Given a list of items which he might wish to have some effect upon as part of the governmental process, the student will select from a list of persons, offices, agencies and activities, those which he might choose to make his opinion known. (100%)

Objective 2. The student will be able to select from a list of descriptions those which apply to public opinion polls and those which do not. (70%)

Objective 3. Given a hypothetical statistical chart of a public opinion survey, and the inferences drawn from it, the student will be able to select which inferences are logical and justified by the data. (80%)

II. Goal: The student will be able to judge critically the factors that create and give weight to political influence.

Objective 4. From a series of multiple choice questions, the student will correctly identify those items which enhance political influence and those which diminish it. (80%)

III. Goal: The student will begin to consider what the individual citizen can do to influence his government. He will consider the alternatives of voting, party activity, interest group activity, writing letters to public officials, the Ralph Nader approach, the Saul Alinsky approach, demonstrations, violence.

Objective 5. The student will write a short paper in class considering the various political options available to the citizen and the likely effects of each. He will give his own opinion on the relative effectiveness of the

various approaches. (100%)

Objective 6. In class discussion, the student will contribute to a discussion of political activism and the value of participation in a democracy. (100%)

UNIT XII - THE MEANING OF DEMOCRACY

We have now considered the people of the United States -- their strengths and weaknesses as citizens and their influence in terms of public opinion. We have also described the on-going reality of the government we have today. Considering all these together, what is the meaning of democracy? What is the best method for making policy decisions?

I. Goal: The student will develop a meaning of democracy which makes sense in the context of American government.

Objective 1. In class, the student will write for twenty minutes on the meaning of democracy and will give specific criteria for judging whether or not a particular government is democratic. (100%)

II. Goal: The student will understand the meaning of the various decision-making models which are commonly used in political science today. He will understand the rational decision-making model which most people carry about unconsciously in their heads as well as the incremental model, the civics model and the Lowi juridical democracy model.

Objective 2. Given a list of decision-making characteristics, the student will be able to identify which decision-making model they fit. (70%)

Objective 3. In class discussion, the student will give reasons for a selection of one of these models as the most appropriate one for the United States. (100%)